

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met with Sheriff Kevin Frye, the Avery County Board of Education and the Avery Fire Commission in a Budget Workshop on Thursday, May 14, 2009 at 4:30 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, Newland, NC.

Members Present: Kenny Poteat, Chairman; Phyllis Forbes, Vice-Chair; Scott Heath; Martha Hicks; Glenn Johnson

Members Absent: None

Call To Order

Chairman Poteat called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

Scott Heath led prayer.

FY Budget 2009/2010

Chairman Poteat stated that overall there are 8 major categories that the County has the responsibility to fund. The following numbers are compared to last year.

Total General Government -7.16% (down from last year)
Total Public Safety +2.66% (up from last year)
Total Public Transportation +1.2% (up from last year)
Environmental Protection -0.85% (down from last year)
Economic and Physical Development -3.71% (down from last year)
Human Services -8.95% (down from last year)
Culture and Recreational with the water tank and land purchase -53% (down from last year) but with these onetime items factored out +0.62% (up from last year)
Education is even right now.

Chairman Poteat questioned what was included in Public Safety. Tim Greene, Finance Officer, advised that Public Safety included sheriff, jail, fire protection services, building inspections, emergency management, EMS, central dispatch, OSHA, medical examiner, rescue squads and humane society.

Avery County Sheriff's Department

Staff Present: Sheriff Kevin Frye; Detective Troy Cook.

Sheriff Kevin Frye spoke to the Board regarding the Sheriff's Department budget. Sheriff Frye advised that a \$15,000 equipment grant had been approved and that \$4000 would be left over from the equipment grant. He stated that seized weapons would be traded in at an estimated cost of \$2773 and the weapons that the Sheriff's Department now has would be traded in at an estimated cost of \$4950.00. All of these monies would be put toward the purchase of the new weapons.

Sheriff Frye stated that his number one priority with his budget is salaries and that he would like to do a one step increase across the board. This would equate to a 5% raise. Sheriff Frye advised that Avery County is below every County around with regards to the salaries for the sheriff's deputies.

Sheriff Frye stated that in 2008 the Sheriff's Department answered 7800 calls which equates to approximately 21 calls a day. Sheriff Frye reported statistics for 2008 for the Avery County Sheriff's Department. Sheriff Frye stated that there have been no added deputies on the road since 2000 and the calls have doubled. He said that all that was getting done was answering calls and nothing proactive or no community work being accomplished. Chairman Poteat questioned if a step increase for the deputies would be Sheriff Frye's number one priority or adding a new deputy. Sheriff Frye stated that a step increase for his deputies was the number one priority with weapons being the second priority and vehicles the third priority. Sheriff Frye also stated that the number one priority for the jail is a part-time nurse and the second priority is cameras.

Sheriff Frye presented a power point presentation in regard to the statistics.

Chairman Poteat advised that he was personally pleased that Avery County at least can consider maintaining the same numbers as last year but above and beyond that would be very difficult.

Chairman Poteat called for a 2 minute recess.

Avery County Board of Education

Avery County Board of Education members and staff present: John Greene, Chairman; Dr. Keith Eades, Superintendent; Danny Clark; Jeff Jaynes; Diane Jaynes.

Chairman Poteat again repeated the increases and decreases in the 8 major categories which are the responsibility of the County and he stated that Education was even with no increase or decrease at this time.

Dr. Keith Eades, Superintendent of Avery County Schools, stated that he appreciated the situation that the County is in. He explained that the school budget was done a little differently this year with meetings being set up early with the principals of each individual school with their requests and also with the Central Service staff. Dr. Eades advised that no person came into the meetings without understanding the dire situation of the economy. He said what is brought to the Board is minimal; there are some increases obviously but mostly these were in regard to health insurance. Dr. Eades advised that after the requests were made from the principals and Central Service staff, the requests were cut by \$2,000,000.

Discussion regarding the Avery County Board of Education's budget.

Dr. Eades explained that he asked Danny Clark, Director of Auxiliary Services, to look at the capital needs and to categorize these needs system wide. He stated that one of the priorities was Central Service Building renovation. Dr. Eades advised that the Board of Education had been in that building for 25 years with minimal renovation. Dr. Eades also spoke about the list of other top priorities of capital needs for the school system.

Dr. Eades advised that the Board of Education had taken a look at the old Sloop Business Office that was for sale for a possible use as the Central Services Office for the school system. Dr. Eades stated that if the Board of Education chooses not to use the Puckett Property and give that back to the County that possibly the proceeds from the sale of the Puckett Property could be used to purchase that facility. He said that there are potentially 14-20 offices, networking is already in place and there are only minimal cosmetic changes that would need to be made.

Jeff Jaynes, Finance Officer for the BOE, stated that the priority list for capital needs was approximately the same as last year excluding the Central Services renovation.

Chairman Poteat said basically the bottom line is a \$380,000 increase in operational and a \$3,000 increase in capital from last year disregarding the Central Office renovation. He also said, in his opinion, this was very realistic.

Phyllis Forbes asked what kind of stimulus money the school system would be receiving. Dr. Eades answered that the Title I program over a 2 year period would be \$415,000 and the Exceptional Children Program over a 2 year period would be \$465,000. This money would help repurpose teachers that could possibly lose their jobs due to state funding cuts.

Scott Heath stated that it seemed to get convoluted what is the County's responsibility and what is Federal and State responsibility and that the responsibilities of the County are clearly different. He said that the County is responsible for maintenance, buildings, and technology equipment, etc. Last year the State and the Federal governments cut ½ million dollars and it came out in the paper that teachers were being laid off and there was a new football field and the comment was made to call your County Commissioners. Mr. Heath advised that when a teacher is laid off the County is not responsible because the County does not fund salaries or personnel. Dr. Eades replied that the Board of Education has made every effort to make it clear that the County does not provide positions.

Dr. Eades explained that the school system was still waiting on the house budget and the biggest challenge at this point is not knowing how much to plan for.

Chairman Poteat asked if as the Board deliberates there were any extra monies have the BOE pondered if the extra monies would be better utilized in capital or operational. Jeff Jaynes stated that his "gut feeling" would be operational but would like to look at that with some of the others input.

Chairman Poteat called for a recess.

Chairman Poteat stated that the meeting was back in regular workshop session at 7:03 p.m. after a brief recess.

Avery County Fire Commission

Members Present: Garry Redding; Shane Garland; Jake Owens; Joe Perry; Daryl Smith; and Charlie Franklin, Fire Department Coordinator

Chairman Poteat shared with the Avery County Fire Commission regarding the 8 major categories that Avery County is responsible for funding. He said that Avery County was very fortunate in that there had been good management in the past and still had good management now and that Avery County was hoping to maintain what was funded last year. Chairman Poteat stated it was a little different with the fire

commission because they had their own fire tax rate. Tim Greene, Finance Officer, advised that the 3.8 cents fire tax now would generate \$1,529,337 for the upcoming year with a 94% collection rate.

Jake Owens, Avery County Fire Commission, said that the Fire Commission is hoping to put a full time person at each fire department especially on the backside of Old Beech Mountain which would help with response time . He said this would require more money budgeted for the full time people. Mr. Owens stated that the Fire Commission is asking for a 1 cent fire tax increase for additional debt reduction and a full time person at each fire department. This would be giving the taxpayers better service throughout the County and would be saving the taxpayer money by lowering their insurance premiums. Mr. Owens also stated that the Fire Commission and Board needed to begin work on a five year plan to combine the fire departments and rescue squads and even possibly on down the road with EMS. Daryl Smith advised that it would take roughly \$113,000 to put a full time person in every fire department.

Discussion regarding the full time personnel at all fire departments and debt reduction.

Chairman Poteat stated that in defense of the Fire Commission he could understand their frustration when the Fire Commission is told to do all of these things but are not given enough money to do them.

Chairman Poteat said he felt very strongly about having full time personnel at all fire departments and it should not be the full responsibility of the Fire Commission to have to fund this.

By Consensus of the Board, the Fire Commission along with the County Manager cooperatively should further explore the option of rescue squads being placed under the Fire Commission.

Chairman Poteat stated that the Board appreciated the Fire Commission coming to this budget workshop.

Adjourn
Motion by Scott Heath and second by Martha Hicks to adjourn this budget workshop at 8:05 p.m.

Kenny Poteat, Chairman
Avery County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:_____
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk